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MANTEL AND FIREPLACE.—I.

BY J. HARRY ADAMS.



N entering a room naturally the first thing that attracts attention is the mantel and fireplace, and particularly if the mantel is a handsome one.

There seems to be no reasonable excuse why at the present time and with the rapid improvement in design and workmanship the mantel should not be a very artistic and attractive piece of furniture.

The manufacturers of mantels have within the past few years made an effort to secure choice designs from noted designers and are working them to the best advantage, both as relates to cabinet-work and finish.

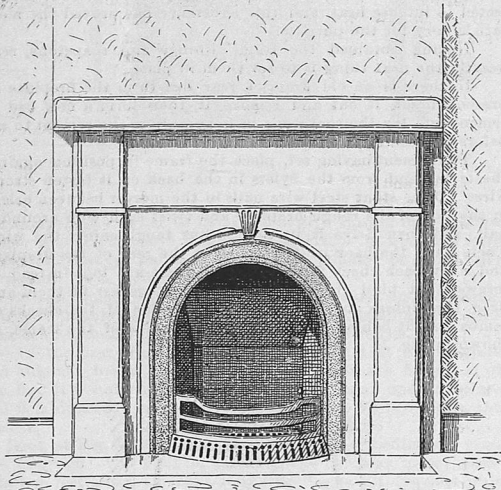


FIG. 1.

There are of course many makers who turn out an inferior and low grade of mantels, but the majority being pushed by the demand from a class of people educated to appreciate a good piece of work, have endeavored to meet this demand, and have to a certain degree succeeded in reaching the mark.

The advancement in design has particularly been characterized by the fact that to see one design a few years ago meant practically to see all, as there seemed to be a stereotyped idea that a fussy affair composed of spindles, rosettes, engraved panels and shelves of wood, in combination with a few mirrors, made a mantel, while to-day everything is more classic.

The more fancy work and gingerbread fittings that could be crowded into the design seemed to be more pleasing, but how differently the designs of to day appear!

Simple and artistic lines predominate; the overcrowding of ornament and patchy appearance of mirrors vulgarizes rather

than enriches, and a comparison of catalogue pages of a few years ago with the lines of samples displayed in the largest warerooms to day but strengthens this statement.

In olden times the fireplace was a necessity, while to-day it is more of an ornament. One hundred years ago and before the age of modern improvements the crane and pot held sway, while to-day if one is found in a modern house it is there only as an artistic feature.

When the value of coal as a heating medium became popular the old open fireplace was discarded and gradually stepped in the background to make room for the more modern coal grate and coal stove. The grate for heating proved much superior to the old way, so that instead of having but two or three large open fireplaces in a house by using the grate each room could have its own fireplace.

The mantels that crowned these fireplaces were generally of slate or marble and a few of stone. In appearance they somewhat resembled Fig. 1, while many of them were more or less embellished with carvings, etc.

These fireplaces remained in use for many years, and up to the present date there are thousands still in use.

At the present time, however, they are not so popular, owing to the preference shown to the more modern small open fireplace. The mantels of slate and marble are also becoming a thing of the past, and are rapidly making way for the modern wood mantels. Not many years ago the idea of building ordinary mantels of wood was considered imprudent, as it was commonly supposed that the close proximity to fire would cause destruction, but to-day there are a thousand wood mantels made to every one of stone, marble or slate.

The matter of expense between the two substances is also of importance to builders, particularly when considerable show is required for little money.

A fair wood mantel combined with a modern fireplace with iron linings, tile facings and hearth, and a metal frame around the fire opening, can be purchased for about \$75 that will make twice or three times the show that a marble or slate set would of the same value.

Then again the wood mantel has a more cheerful and a warmer appearance than the cold, and in the majority of cases, unsightly marble or slate mantel.

At the present time many of these old mantels and fireplaces are being taken out of houses and the modern wood mantels and open fireplace substituted. There are, however, many owners who prefer the old style of mantel, but had rather have an open fireplace instead of the grate but do not know how to bring about the change.

An open fireplace is of course much more desirable than the old-style grate, as in it wood, coal or gas log can be burned,

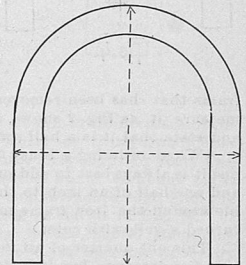


FIG. 2.

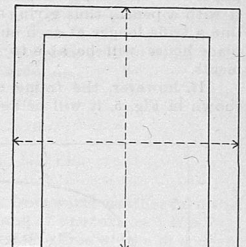


FIG. 3.

and with a pair of bright andirons a much more cheerful effect can be obtained.

It is an easy matter to convert an old-style grate like Fig. 1 to an open fireplace like Fig. 8 if one only knows how, and if the directions are carefully followed it will be found a simple matter to bring about the change.

It will first be necessary to remove the grate, then tear out the soapstone or firebrick linings; back of these will be found some bricks or mortar which must be removed, and then the anchorage wires will be found which secure the frame against the facing; these wires must be broken loose from the brickwork of the chimney and the frame removed.

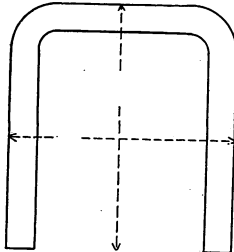


FIG. 4.

When this is accomplished a clear open space will be the result, which is in reality the open fireplace, but to finish it a set of metal linings and a brass frame around the opening in the marble will be necessary.

The required measurements must now be taken to order the frame and linings by. If the iron

frame that has been removed is a circular or half round top measure it as Fig. 2 shows, giving the total width and height, and state that it is a half-round top.

When ordering a brass frame to take the place of an iron one it is always best to add one-quarter of an inch to the height and one-half of an inch to the width, as in most cases the marble around the iron frame may have become smoke-stained or turned a yellowish color.

This one-quarter of an inch added all around partly covers this discoloration, but if it does not the stains may be removed by washing the marble with sapollo and a soft cloth dipped in water or weak ammonia. If this fails take a piece of felt or extra heavy flannel and rub it, then sprinkle some finely pulverized pumice-stone on it and rub the stained surface until the discoloration disappears. Take care not to rub too hard with the pumice, as it will remove the polish from the face of the marble.

If the frame should have a flat top and square corner, such as shown in Fig. 3, give the full width, adding one-half an inch, the height adding one-quarter of an inch, and state it is a square top frame; but if the frame should have a round corner, as illustrated in Fig. 4, give the width and height, adding the one-half and one-quarter of an inch respectively, and lay a piece of stiff paper or cardboard behind one corner and mark around it with a pencil, thus giving the radius of the circle. Draw the line a trifle longer at each end of the quarter circle. Any fireplace house will be able to make a frame with the measurements.

If, however, the frame should have an elliptical top, as shown in Fig. 5, it will be necessary to give the width, adding

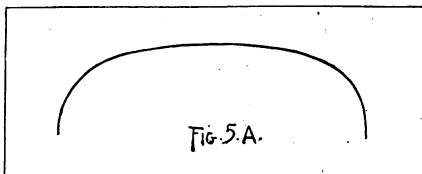


FIG. 5.A.

one-half inch, the height, adding one-quarter of an inch, and take a piece of stout brown paper, free from creases or wrinkles, or a larger piece of stiff card, and lay it behind the top of the

frames. Mark with a pencil around the extreme top of the frame, and describe the curve as shown in Fig. 5-A.

The fireplace house making this frame will then use your card as a templet and bind the top of the frame to meet the described line.

For a set of iron linings measure the depth of the opening from the front of the marble or slate facings back to the bricks at the rear of the fireplace Fig. 6 (A), also the width across the back B, the height of the opening C, and the width of the opening at the front D. This last measurement does not mean the width of the opening in the facing, but the width of the brick work or rough fireplace inside the facing or mantel.

These measurements will enable the manufacturer to send a set of linings that will fit the fireplace, and also a soapstone

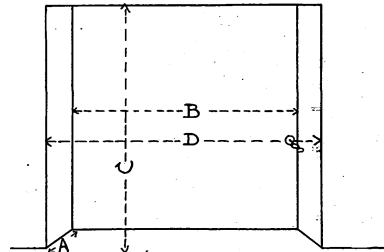


FIG. 6.

rear hearth. The rear hearth is that part of the hearth that extends under the fire, and it is generally of stone, as it is subjected to intense heat, and this substance has proved the most satisfactory for the purpose.

Having obtained the frame linings and soapstone rear hearth, the next thing is to set them in place.

If there is an old firebrick rear hearth in the fireplace at present break it out and remove it, then form a new bed of cement and lay the soapstone in it and allow the cement to set before proceeding further.

The cement having set, place the frame in position against the facing and from the eyelets in the back of it fasten strong wires. Drive stout steel wire nails in the mortar between bricks in the side of the rough fireplace and twist each wire around a nail, and then drive it in tight, thus tightening the wire. Then place the back of the lining in the rear of the fireplace and screw each cheek fast to it, or if there are lugs instead of screws that bind the back and cheeks together fit them and drag the linings forward so the front edge of the cheeks or jambs will fit behind the flanges at the inside of the frame, as shown in Fig. 7.

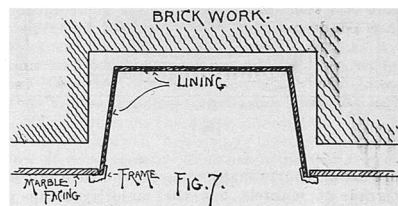


FIG. 7.

Mix some cement, sand and stones or bits of brick together and throw it over the top of the lining to fill up the space left between the linings and rough brick work. This when dry affords a solid backing that will keep the linings cool and also prevent them from warping, which they would have a tendency to do otherwise if subjected to intense heat.

This applies only to the medium or cheap grade of linings that are seldom more than a quarter of an inch thick.

The more expensive and stout linings are not apt to warp, as they vary in thickness from three-eighths to five-eighths of an inch, so that it would take a series of unusually hot fires to make any effect on them.

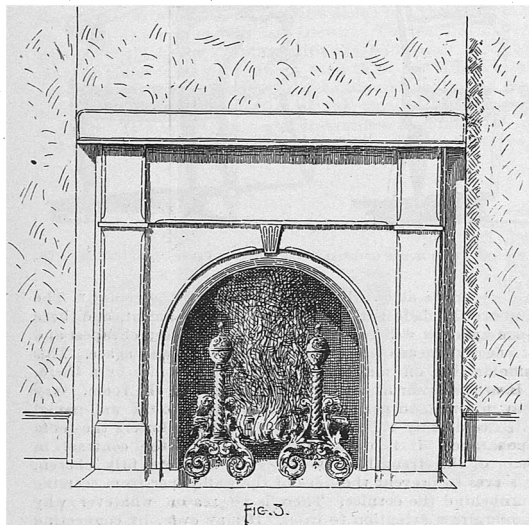
THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

Having completed the work and with the addition of a pair of andirons and some blazing logs the converted fireplace will have the appearance of Fig. 8.

If it is desired to burn coal rather than wood a basket grate can be purchased which at will may be moved backward and forward on the hearth or removed at any time when a wood fire is desired.

Gas connections can also be put in and a gas log placed on the andirons. This will be found a very good imitation of wood and affords a hot fire as well as a clean one, there being no ashes or dust resulting therefrom.

There are many houses that contain an unattractive slate or marble mantel of old style that can well be spared for a more modern and artistic one in wood, but perhaps the cost of a new

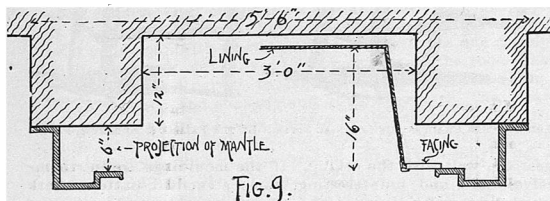


one compels the owner to be satisfied with the old one, so a few simple and inexpensive designs to construct in wood are here illustrated that can be made by any cabinetmaker or good joiner carpenter, for a moderate price.

A few timely suggestions on the dimensions and construction of a mantel will enable one who is not familiar with this branch of manufacture to overcome some difficulties.

In the first place take the measurements of the fireplace and chimney breast, ascertain the depth of the fireplace; if you find it is not sufficiently deep to act as an open fireplace and it is desired deeper this must be gained by projecting the mantel.

Look at Fig. 9. This shows a ground plan of a chimney breast and fireplace. You find, for instance, the chimney breast measures five feet and six inches long, the fireplace three feet wide



and the depth twelve inches; you wish to have a fireplace sixteen inches deep, so you make a projection on the mantel of six inches, and thus you have eighteen inches of fireplace, from the facing line back to the rough brickwork; but when you get the facing up and the iron lining in place the actual distance

from the facing back to the iron lining will be about sixteen inches.

If it is desired to have a tile facing it is best to have it well proportioned to the opening in the mantel, and also to afford a

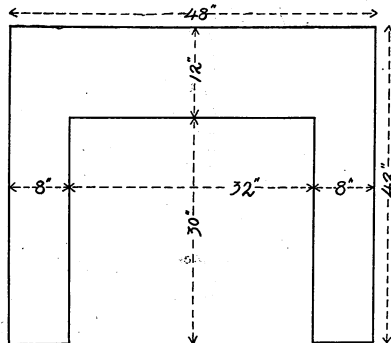


FIG. 10.

good fireplace opening. Should the rough brick fireplace opening be thirty-six inches wide by thirty or thirty-two inches high, the wood opening in the mantel forty-eight by forty-two inches high, a well-proportioned facing would be about eight inches on the sides with a frieze twelve inches high and the frame size thirty-two by thirty inches, as shown in Fig. 10.

If, however, the wood opening in the mantel should be forty-two inches wide and high, the brick opening thirty by thirty inches, a good facing would be six inches on each side with a frieze twelve inches high. Fig. 11.

The average size of the modern open fireplace is thirty by thirty inches, and the frame is generally made one-half of an

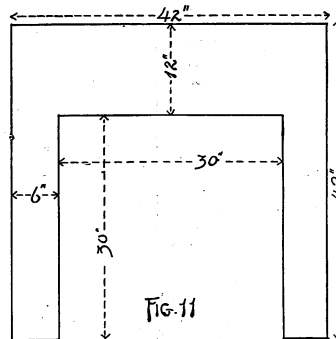


FIG. 11

inch wider and a quarter higher, so that one-quarter of an inch of frame may lap on the facing all around.

(To be continued.)

DECORATIVE NOTE.

TO derive the best possible result from warm weather furnishings, matting should be plain and of fine texture. If a rug is desired, a square one made from three widths of a deep pile carpet in willow green, with fringe at the ends matching the carpet will be found most pleasing. There are greens and greens, it must be remembered, some soothing, cooling and restful, others of that variety of colors which "hit you in the eye;" but the right shade of green combined with white, adapted as a color scheme for a summer room, is unsurpassed. As contrasted to hot colors, such as brown and red, even the moral influence wielded on a torrid day is infinite.